

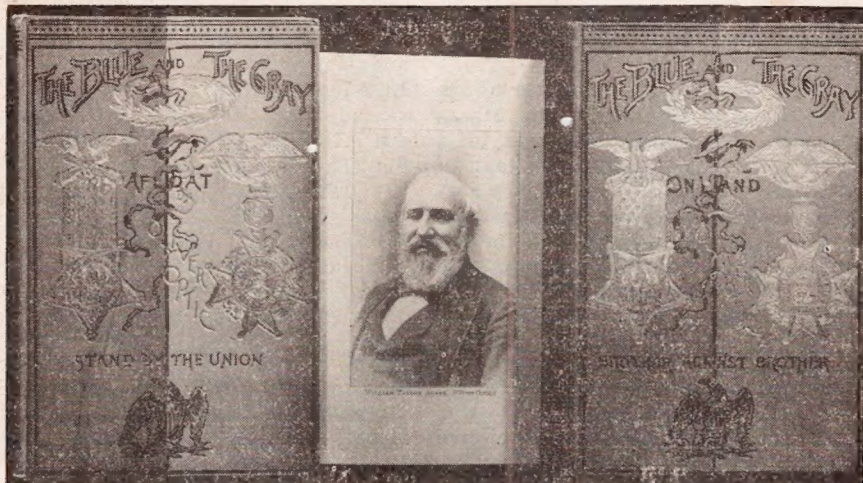
DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

Vol. 25, No. 7

July 15, 1957

Whole No. 298



William T. Adams (Oliver Optic) The Boys Friend

Oliver Optic

By Roy B. Van Devier

Probably no literary man in America has ministered to the pleasure of a greater number of young people than William Taylor Adams, better known by his pen name "Oliver Optic," who was a native of Massachusetts and was born in Medway on July 30, 1822. He was of English descent, his ancestor, Henry Adams, having come from England to Quincy, Mass., in 1630. William was the son of Capt. Laban and Cathern Johnson. His father was proprietor of the Lamb tavern, Boston. He attended the public schools of Boston, his father having removed thither, and the private school of Abel Whitney in the same city. In 1838 the family located at West Roxbury, Mass., and there he made his earliest attempts at literary

composition, his first piece being eight pages long, his second, twenty-five, and his third, eighty. His first printed article appeared in the "Social Monitor." His career as a writer for the young dates from about 1850.

In 1843 he was chosen principal of Harris school of Boston, and his experience as a teacher in that city lasted for about twenty years. Then he resigned his position and went to Europe to get material for his "Young America Abroad Series." In 1846 he was married to Miss Sarah Jenkins of Dorchester, to this union was born two daughters, Alice Marie and Emma Louise.

He was the editor of "The Student and Schoolmate," from 1858 to 1866; and in 1867 he edited "Oliver Optic's Magazine: Our Boys and Girls," in 1881 he edited "Our Little Ones." Many of his stories were first printed

EDITORIAL

The response to my open letter in the May issue of the Round-up has been very gratifying. Enough pledges have been received to make an attempt at publishing the Golden Days bibliographical listing. Some 20 members have made pledges amounting to \$45.00. The difference in cost will be borne by your editor with a hope that additional sales of the listing will make up the difference. Please forward your pledges at your earliest convenience.

I have estimated that it will take 16 pages to give a complete chronological listing including reprinting information within Golden Days and suitable illustrations. If monies received appreciably exceed the amount of pledges, I would also like to include an alphabetical listing by authors. This will take up an estimated additional 8 pages at a cost of \$38.00.

in "Our Boys and Girls," and afterwards in book form.

In 1867 he became a member of the school board of Dorchester, Mass., receiving every vote but one in a ballot of 1,150, and that one cast by himself. In 1870 and in 1873 he was re-elected. For twenty years he was a Sunday-school teacher, and for ten years a Sunday-school superintendent.

Adams' first book was written in 1853 under the pen name of "Warren T. Ashton." It had a very large sale and was entitled "Hatchie, the Guardian Slave; or, The Heiress of Bellevue. A Tale of the Mississippi and the South-West." His next venture, however, "In Doors and Out" (1854-1855), a collection of short stories, written under "Oliver Optic" was still more successful; and he then attempted a book for boys, "The Boat Club" 1854, written also under Oliver Optic, which proved so popular that he followed it with five more titles in the "Boat Club Series" (1855-1860). The initial volume, "The Boat Club," ran through sixty editions.

Other series followed fast: "Riverdale Stories" 1862; "Woodville Stories" 1864-67; "Army and Navy" 1865-66; "Starry Flag" 1868-69; "Young America Abroad" first series, 1866-

70; "Lake Shore" 1869-70; "Onward and Upward" 1871-72; "Yacht Club" 1872-75; "Young America Abroad" second series, 1871-77; "Great Western" 1876-82; "Boat Builder" 1882-87; "The Blue and Gray-Afloat" 1888-93; "The Blue and the Gray—On Land" 1894-1899 and "All over the World Library" 1892-98.

He also wrote two novels for older readers and they were "The Way of the World" 1866, and "Living too Fast," 1876. He wrote a fine book on Grant, entitled, "Our Standard Bearer; or, Life of General Ulysses S. Grant." 1868, a new edition with additional material was issued in 1888. "Just his Luck," (1877) 1878. "Optic" and Others wrote "The Great Bonanza." 1876.

Although he is known as Oliver Optic," it was not his only pen name. He took the name from a character in a play that appeared in Boston, "Doctor Optic," adding "Oliver." But he wrote love stories under the name of "Irving Brown," travel sketches as "Clingham Hunter, M. D.," and sometimes he would sign himself "Old Stager." He wrote a short article, entitled, "Anecdote of General Grant," under the name of "Captain Bernard Galligaken," it was printed in "Oliver Optic" Magazine: Our Boys and Girls,

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He wrote four serials under the name of "Brooks McCormick" which appeared in *Golden Argosy*; and were published in book form until 1902 by Street and Smith in their Medal Library. The titles are as follows: "How He Won"; "Rival Battalions"; "Nature's Young Noblemen" and "The Giant Islanders."

He also wrote one serial, entitled, "The Young Actor," under the name of "Gayle Winterton." It also was published in book form by Street and Smith in 1902, in their Medal Library.

In the "United States Catalog," Books in print: New York, 1912, there is a book, listed, under Oliver Optic, entitled, "The Casket of Diamonds," with the imprint of Charles C. Thompson Company of Chicago: Since I have never seen a copy of this book, I can not give the year it was first published, it could have been issued first by Thompson & Thomas, as C. C. Thompson Co., were successors to that firm.

From April, 1865, to the end of 1866, Adams' publishers, Lee & Shepard, sold over fifty thousand copies of his "Army and Navy" stories. About the time the third volume of this series was published, the preface of which is dated April 30, 1865, one of the author's most valued friends strongly advised him to hasten the completion and issue of the remaining books of the series, because he said the war was over, and the demand for such works must soon cease altogether. The author was disposed to accept his view, and did accept it, so far as the demand for the series was concerned. He had his "Young America Abroad" in contemplation at the time, and went to Europe that year to gather his material; but as soon as possible he finished his work on the books, dreading the catastrophe predicted by his friend. More to his own than to the prophet's astonishment, the demand for the volumes did not cease for over fifty years. Since there was such a demand for the books; his publishers, asked him to write another series of the same kind, and so he wrote "The Blue and

the Gray" Afloat series. The first volume which is entitled, "Taken by the Enemy," was finished on June 12, 1888. About the time the sixth and concluding volume of this series was finished, the preface of which is dated March 16, 1893, it was suggested to him that another series, relating exclusively to incidents to the army, should follow. After forty years of labor in this particular field, and having already exhausted the threescore and ten of human life, he could not be assured that he would live long enough, to complete such a series, though still in excellent health; but he planned to make a beginning of the work as soon as other engagements would permit him to do so.

"Brother Against Brother; or, The War on the Border," was the first volume of "The Blue and the Gray—On Land" series, it was finished on July 4, 1894. I would like to quote the first few lines from this fine book: "NEUTRALITY! There is no such thing as neutrality in the present situation, my son!" protested Noah Lyon to the stout boy of sixteen who stood in front of him on the bridge over Bar Creek, in the State of Kentucky. "He that is not for the Union is against it. No man can serve two masters, Dexter."

"That is just what I was saying to Sandy," replied the boy, whom everybody but his father and mother called "Deck."

It is a fact; Adams received more commendatory letters from young people in regard to his "Army and Navy" stories than concerning of any other of his books.

In the last five years of his life, he circled the world, gathering material for his "All-Over-The-World Library," crossing the Atlantic for the twenty-first time. For some of the earlier books of the series, he travelled several times to the West Indies.

He died March 27, 1897, at his home in Dorchester.

There were 17 serials of "Oliver Optic's" printed in *Golden Argosy* and *Golden Days* that were not published in book form before his death,

His books sold so good and since there was such a demand for the "Optic" books, his publishers, had them issued in book form: six of them on April 1, 1912. The titles are as follows: "Building Himself Up;" "Louis Chiswick's Mission;" "Lyon Hart's Heroism;" "Royal Tarr's Pluck;" "Striving for His Own;" "The Professor's Son;" (1910) "Every Inch a Boy;" "Making a Man of Himself;" "The Young Pilot;" "His Own Helper;" "The Cruise of the Dandy;" "Honest Kit Dunstable;" (1911) "Always in Luck;" "Among the Missing;" "The Young Hermit;" "Prisoners of the Cave;" and "Three Young Silver Kings." (1912) These books are listed in Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Co., catalogs for 1910, 1911 and 1912. There is no date on title page; the only copyright date, is the date when they were first printed by Golden Argosy or Golden Days.

There are two types of binding: First type have the titles in Gold lettering; later type has the titles in black lettering.

References to his other pen names: Warren T. Ashton is credited to Adams in Allibone's Supplement Vol. I #1891, page 14: Adams also speaks of his first book in his preface to "Down the River."

Capt. Bernard Galligaken: See "Our Standard Bearer."

Irving Brown, Clingham Hunter, M. D. and Old Stager given in Scribner's Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. I, 1928, page 102.

Brooks McCormick is credited to Adams in The United States Catalog, Third edition, New York: 1912. It is also credited to Adams in an article on pen names in Publisher's Weekly, June 15, 1940.

Gayle Winterton is credited to Adams in the Library of Congress index.

Although the preface of "Optic's" first book is dated Sept. 12, 1854; and his second book is dated Sept. 20, 1854, the first editions of both books are dated 1855. "Just His Luck," was copyright by Lee & Shepard in 1877; first edition has 1878 on title page.

The Soldier Boy and The Sailor

Boy; both were copyrighted by Adams in 1863, the preface of the first volume was dated Feb. 22, 1864, and The Sailor Boy was dated Nov. 24, 1864. Both books were published April, 1865, and have 1865 on title page.

For References to these last two books: See The Soldier Boy: 1893 edition. New Preface.

Since I do not have all of Adams' books in the first editions; I had to give the copyright date on a few of them.

The 30th of July will be the 135th anniversary of William Taylor Adams' birth.

THE DEADWOOD DICK, Junior, STORIES NOT WRITTEN BY WHEELER

By Albert Johannsen

In The House of Beadle and Adams (Vol. II, 294-95) I pointed out that Edward L. Wheeler, the author of the Deadwood Dick, Senior, stories, died about 1885. The fictitious Deadwood Dick had died for the last time in Half-Dime Library No. 430, October 20, 1885, and a new series, giving the adventures of Deadwood Dick, Junior, began on January 19, 1886, but still with the by-line Edward L. Wheeler. There had been no announcement in any Beadle publication that Wheeler had died, nor was it known even to other Beadle writers that a ghost-writer was taking his place. In the Beadle book I mentioned that Wheeler was still living June 29, 1884, for on that day he wrote a humorous letter to his old friend R. D. Locke of Titusville, Pennsylvania. He was then in good health and living with his wife, Alice, and his year-old son, in West Chester, Pennsylvania, 27 miles west of Philadelphia. The Philadelphia City Directory for 1885 lists him at 3604 Fairmont Avenue, but he is missing from the next year's Directory, and only his wife, Alice, appears in 1887. In the Directories for 1891 and thereafter, his wife is listed as "Widow of Edward L. Wheeler." It thus appears that he died between the time when the data for the 1885 Dir-

ectory was collected, or even later when the manuscript for **Half-Dime Library** No. 430 was turned in to Beadle and Adams, perhaps two or three months before the date of its publication, October 20, 1885, but before the appearance of the first Deadwood Dick, Junior, story in January, 1886.

In the manuscript of a **Supplement** to the Beadle book, for which there seems to be no immediate prospect of publication, I have the following additional data which I do not choose to withhold longer.

In March, 1951, George Cowdrick, a son of Jesse C. Cowdrick, one of Beadle's best writers, sent me his father's original account book which lists his stories with titles, remuneration received, and dates at which the manuscripts were sent to Beadle. The account book begins in September, 1892, when the manuscript of **Half-Dime Library**, No. 792, was sent in, and ends with the mailing date of **Half-Dime Library** No. 941, June 18, 1895, although it did not appear in print until August 6, 1895, nearly two months later. Unfortunately the one note book of Cowdrick's which has been preserved, begins and ends in the middle of the Deadwood Dick, Junior, series, and the stories which he wrote for that series, as well as those with his own by-line, preceding and following these issues of the **Half-Dime Library**, are unknown. We can, however, be thankful that the true author of some 25 **Half-Dime Libraries**, representing Episodes 61 to 85 of the Deadwood Dick, Junior, saga in the middle of the whole series of 97, is now definitely known.

The important **Half-Dime Library** numbers and the dates of their issue are as follows:

1-½DL, October 15, 1877. Date of publication of the first Deadwood Dick, Sr., story.

430-½DL, October 20, 1885. Deadwood Dick stories ended after 33 numbers.

Wheeler died in the autumn of 1885.

443-½DL, January 19, 1886. The Deadwood Dick, Jr., series began. Episode 1

752-½DL, December 22, 1891. Deadwood Dick, Jr., Episode 54.

753-½DL, December 29, 1891. Cowdrick's "Broadway Billy" story No. 17.

787-½DL, August 23, 1892. Deadwood Dick, Jr., Episode 60.

790-½DL, September 13, 1892. Cowdrick's "Broadway Billy" story No. 23.

792-½DL, September 27, 1892. Deadwood Dick, Jr. Episode 61. First number listed in Cowdrick's account book.

816-½DL, March 14, 1893. Episode 66, Deadwood Dick, Jr.

880-½DL, June 5, 1894. No. 39 and last of the Broadway Billy stories.

940-½DL, July 30, 1895. Episode 85, Deadwood Dick, Jr. Last item on Cowdrick's list.

941-½DL, August 6, 1895. Cowdrick's "Bowling Green detective."

946-½DL, September 10, 1896. Deadwood Dick, Jr., Episode 86. Author unknown.

1009-½DL, November 24, 1896. Last time Cowdrick's name appears in **Half-Dime Library** list.

1011-½DL, December 8, 1896. Deadwood Dick, Jr. Episode 96.

1018-½DL, January 26, 1897. The 97th and last episode of the Deadwood Dick, Jr., saga.

1023, 1027, and 1031-½DL, March and April, 1897. These final three stories by Prentiss Ingraham and the following one by Eyster, and possibly also one by Hemyng, were the only original stories subsequently printed by Beadle in the **Half-Dime Library**.

1049-½DL, August 31, 1897. William R. Eyster's "Queen Edna."

1069-½DL, January 18, 1898. Bracebridge Hemyng's "On Land and Sea."

1074-½DL, February 22, 1898. The last **Half-Dime Library** issued under the Beadle and Adams imprint, altho the Library was continued by M. J. Ivers & Co., to

1168-½DL, December, 1905, but all the numbers were reprints of earlier issues.

Cowdrick died June 30, 1898.

The Deadwood Dick, Junior, stories definitely written by Cowdrick

The first items listed by Cowdrick in his account book, are **Half-Dime Library** No. 790, "Broadway Billy" story No. 23, with his own by-line, published September 13, 1892, and **Half-Dime Library** No. 792, "Deadwood Dick, Junior" Episode 61, September 27, 1892, with Wheeler's by-line. For these two stories he received \$175, which was more than Beadle and Adams usually paid for **Half-Dime Library** manuscripts. During the remainder of 1892, Cowdrick sent in nine stories, of which **Half-Dime Libraries** Nos. 797, 802, 807 and 812 were Deadwood Dick, Jr. Episodes 62 to 65, with the Wheeler by-line, and the others Broadway Billy stories Nos. 24 to 28, with Cowdrick's. The dates at which they were sent in usually preceded publication by two or three months. Cowdrick's list continues, giving all stories with his own by-line and all with Wheeler's up to and including **Half-Dime Library** No. 940, "Deadwood Dick, Jr.'s Shake up," the 85th Episode, and No. 941, Cowdrick's "Bowling Green Detective's Drop." Here the account book unfortunately comes to an end.

Cowdrick thus takes us completely through the 61st to the 85th Deadwood Dick, Jr. episodes. It is to be noted that through the entire list, the Cowdrick stories alternate, without a single exception, with those with the Wheeler by-line, and thus establishes a definite pattern.

The final 12 Deadwood Dick, Jr., stories probably also by Cowdrick.

This alternation of the two names continues even beyond Cowdrick's list to the end of the Deadwood Dick, Jr. series, except that between **Half-Dime Libraries** 912 and 918, there are two of Wheeler's stories (but one of these is a reprint of an older story from the **Banner Weekly** and apparently used as a stop-gap). This happens again between 997-½DL and 1004-½DL with another reprinted Wheeler. The next number, 1009-½DL, "The Girl Cyclist," is the last of Cowdrick's own stories written for Beadle and Adams. Following this came two with Wheel-

er's by-line, 1011-½DL, the 96th Deadwood Dick, Jr. story, and 1018-½DL, the 97th and last episode of the series. This continued regular alternation of the Cowdrick and Wheeler stories, strongly suggests that these final 12 Deadwood Dick, Junior, stories, extending beyond Cowdrick's list, were also written by him. Add to this the fact that Cowdrick's final novel for Beadle and Adams (1009-½DL) with his own by-line was followed only by two Deadwood Dick, Jr. stories, which ended that series also, makes the supposition almost a certainty.

The "Wheeler" Deadwood Dick, Jr., stories preceding Cowdrick's list.

The real author of the first 60 episodes of the adventures of Deadwood Dick, Junior, is more difficult to identify with certainty. Whitson said that he had edited some of the early numbers, but there is no record of how many nor of who wrote the remainder. Applying the same Sherlockian method from Episode 1 (443-½DL, January 19, 1886) to Episode 60 (787-½DL, August 23, 1892), we find that from No. 1, Deadwood Dick, to Cowdrick's "Broadway Billy" story No. 17, the sequence is irregular, usually with one, two or three Wheeler stories between each one of Cowdrick's. However, beginning with Deadwood Dick, Jr., Episode 55, 759-½DL, we again find that the Cowdrick and Wheeler stories alternate regularly to tie up with Cowdrick's list, with the single exception that the positions of 782-½DL by Wheeler and 783-½DL by Cowdrick, are reversed so that two of Wheeler's are followed by two of Cowdrick's. This may be due simply to the fact that the publisher's reader or the editor had finished correcting one of the stories before the other. After this single departure from the regular sequence, the alternations continue until they tie up with the Deadwood Dick, Jr. stories known to be by Cowdrick.

Summarizing, we may say that all of the Deadwood Dick, Junior, stories were ghost-written. The author of the first 54 episodes is unknown. The

55th to the 60th are probably by Cowdrick, the 61st to the 85th are definitely known to be by him, and the final 12, episodes 86 to 97, are probably also by him. To determine the author of the unknown episodes, by comparing styles of writing, is too hazardous, for they are action stories which would have a certain sameness regardless of who wrote them.

The mystery of Wheeler's letter-head still unsolved

The illustration of Wheeler's letter-head of 1883, reproduced in the Beadle book (II, 295) was photographed by me from a letter written by Wheeler to R. D. Locke, of Titusville, Pennsylvania, June 29, 1884. In spite of the fact that Wheeler listed at the side "Deadwood Dick Novels, 122 numbers," only 28 had actually been published when the letter was written, and when the letter-head was printed in 1883 there were one or two less. At the time of his death only 33 had been published. It is curious that his statement that he was the author of 122 Deadwood Dick novels should come so close to the actual number published under his name, for, including the ghost-written "Junior" stories, there was a total of 130 issues. Was Wheeler's letter prophetic or did Wheeler perhaps write outlines of contemplated stories which were, or were not, used by his ghost-writers? Nowhere is there any indication that Wheeler had anything to do with the Deadwood Dick, Jr., stories, and there is much to indicate that he did not.

I would like to add here a few words to clear up some of the rumors about Wheeler himself that have been published and republished, copied one from another with no foundation whatever on facts. In the *Novel Hunter's Year Book*, 1929, page 42, William J. Benners wrote that Wheeler was reported to have left his wife and big family of children, had moved west, and was down and out. As a matter of fact, Wheeler's own letter to Mr. Locke, June 29, 1884, speaks cheerfully of his wife, and says he has "but one child, a bouncing yearling boy," so he could hardly have had a "big family" before he died

about a year later! Apparently Benners confused another Wheeler with Edward.

"Wheeler is said to have called everybody 'pard' but it was merely an esthetic mannerism, for there is a rumor that he was never in his life farther west than Jersey City," said Pearson ("Dime Novels," p. 107). Even Titusville is 300 miles farther west than Jersey City! As for Wheeler's habit of calling everyone "pard," it may have been no affectation at all, but a habit carried over from his boyhood days when he lived in Titusville, Pennsylvania, where the first oil well in the United States was drilled in 1859 by Col. Edwin Drake. The whole region was swarming with oil men, and I have been told by some of the few remaining persons who knew Wheeler, that he was a quiet, cheerful young man, who did not mix with the crowd but liked to sit unobtrusively in a corner of a hotel lobby or wherever crowds gathered, and continually take notes of anything that he might be able to use in his stories in the future.

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